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2020-01

Robbins , N 2020 , ' Promoting Value Practice in Museums Creates Impact ' , Curator , vol. 63 , no. 1 , pp. 55-68 . <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12350>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/337991>

<https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12350>

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Promoting Value Practice in Museums Creates Impact

NINA ROBBINS

Abstract This article examines how museological value discussion can offer a tool for museum professionals to engage themselves in the current discourse regarding building sustainable futures. The focus of the article is on collection care and collection development. It describes the latest interview and workshop results regarding museum values in the field of collection development among Finnish museum professionals and students. In addition, it emphasizes the integration of theoretical knowledge and its practical application. Promoting and creating opportunities for value discussion among museum professionals increases the ability of these professionals to further engage in such value-related discourse with various stakeholders. Eventually, the benefits of this kind of value-based discussions are to be seen in the more coherent and focused ones regarding museological values between and among various parties, be they museum professionals, politicians, students or museum visitors. The initial idea for the interviews, and subsequently the workshops as well, emerged from a collection development survey conducted in 2012 among Finnish art museums, which was published in 2016 by the author. Based on the material analyzed at that time, it became clear that the issue of active values in Finnish museums would need further study.



INTRODUCTION

It is clear that value-based discussion within any institution is an ongoing process. As part of the professional conduct every new generation needs to situate themselves in the context of these discussions. In order to get information about the current value discourse taking place in Finnish museums and among Finnish students, as well as to further enrich the value material previously gathered from the collection development survey conducted in 2016, hands-on value workshops for students and a set of peer-to-peer interviews for museum professionals were planned. These took place in 2017 and 2018.

In spring 2018, I interviewed four museum professionals about the direction of collection development in Finland: the Collection Curator from the Tuusula Art Museum, located in a rural area in southern Finland; the Collection Management Director from the National Gallery of Finland, located in Helsinki; the Collection Curator from the Rovaniemi Art Museum, located in southern Lapland and the Collection Curator from the Helsinki City Museum, located in Helsinki. In addition to the museum interviews, four hands-on value workshops for students were organized in 2017 and 2018 in the following educational institutions: bachelor- and master's-level students of the Helsinki University Museum Studies program, master's-level

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students of the Reinwardt Academy Museum Studies program, located in Amsterdam and bachelor-level students of conservation from the Metropolia Polytechnic in Helsinki. These two-hour workshops were part of an ongoing process, working towards the aim of increasing hands-on and value-related practices among future museum professionals (Thomas, Wessman and Heikkilä 2018). This is why the article focuses on the professional application of values, rather than on their philosophical traditions and aspects.

In the article, the term “value” is understood to encompass cultural, aesthetic and moral guidelines, under which museum professionals conduct their preservation work in museums (ICOM Strategic Plan 2016–2022, 2018). These guidelines have their origin in such disciplines as history and philosophy but need practical application in order to function as tools for museum professionals. For its part, the study continues the endeavor towards such approaches in the field of museology, creating tools for museum professionals to engage in value-oriented discussions. The aim is eventually to inspire future students of museology and future museum professionals to actively engage and challenge themselves in these discussions. Prior research shows that in order for value discussions to result in applicable, real-life tools, it is important to achieve a coherent understanding of the value network behind any given actions (Holden 2006; Scott 2013). This means making the values that guide

our work visible and reveal the impact factor of that work. The results of this research is offering tools toward this end.

MUSEOLOGICAL VALUE DISCUSSION AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF VALUES

It is clear that our world values various phenomena from multiple perspectives:

philosophical, aesthetic, morally bound, ethical and economic. In general, values are an essential part of any museum practice, and give the needed support for decision-making. Economic pressures have challenged museums to focus on their message and significance. In this work, one cannot find relevant outcomes without value discussions, and values are generally seen more from a practical point of view than through their philosophical interpretations, i.e. efforts are made to come up with practical applications to ease the everyday work of professionals. The philosophical tradition offers the needed background for this work and functions as the base camp on which to build any professional applications (Danto 1964; Dickie 1971; 1974; 2001; Wollheim 1980; Haapala 2010). Within the museum profession it is especially in the field of value application that values have been studied (Holden 2006; Ehdotus museopoliittiseksi ohjelmaksi 2017; Piekola, Suojanen and Vaino 2013; Porter and Kramer 2011; Scott 2008; Scott 2013). In addition to the traditional philosophical or aesthetic approaches to values, these studies show how to evaluate real-life situations and how to help expedite the application of practical tools. They take the contemporary environment as their starting point, relying largely on the current audience experience when analyzing the various values that effect museum work. Since the turn of the new millennium there has been a growing interest in studying non-profit organizations, especially the meaningfulness of museums, as well as to map out those audiences to whom museums might matter (Weil 2002; Knell 2004; Simon 2010). All this indicates that museums can be policy makers in the field of cultural heritage. In general, authors introduce methods of making museum work relevant to various audiences. The need for a wide perspective is acknowledged in these studies, but the emphasis

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is often on the meaningfulness of our own time or the meaningfulness of current visitor experiences. Such terms as “audience engagement” and “co-creation” are used to describe current trends in museological writing. Furthermore, more extreme themes such as “Do museums still need objects?” (Conn 2010) or “Reinventing the museum” (Anderson 2004) have been introduced. There are suggestions to use the collections more effectively and requests to act like *les enfants terribles* (Museums 2020 2012: 19–20).

Currently, meaningfulness is rarely seen from the collection care and development perspective or as a potentially long-term and accumulative feature. This became clear also from the Artefacta (The Finnish Network for Artefact Studies) survey results of *Konkreettinen esinetutkimus harvinaista* (Concrete Object Research is Rare) published in 2016. Artefacta is an open network of researchers, museum professionals, students and people interested in our cultural heritage. It promotes object research and aims to increase the appreciation of material culture in Finland. In their 2016 survey, they mapped out the level of object research and ascertained reasons for the low level of interest. The survey was directed towards all who had conducted object research during their careers, as well as towards collection caretakers in museums. Of the survey answers, 89% thought that the level of object research was low. The survey listed various reasons for this: research about our material culture is not fashionable today, a fundamental lack of resources, a lack of personnel or time and the inevitably covert character of object research were among the reasons listed in the survey answers. Furthermore, it was indicated that interest in general has shifted towards other issues and themes in memory organizations, and various short-term functions were especially seen as resource consuming. Different digital applications were also considered.

Digital platforms such as www.finna.fi (a free access search service for Finnish museums, libraries and archives) were seen as helpful in making preliminary mapping of material, but not as information rich enough to function as serious research tools. Survey answers added that co-operation between universities and museums should be further nurtured, and personnel exchange between universities and museums should be developed. It was seen as important that museum collections open themselves up more to researchers and any research results would be freely available to museums. The idea of open access was promoted (Artefacta 2016). Methods suggested in the Artefacta survey have not gone unnoticed. Focusing on the practical application of museum value work will

result into finding co-operative projects between researchers and museum professionals. This will eventually create a common ground for understanding.

There are statements, surveys and collection-oriented writings that recognize objects' cumulative meaningfulness and their interpretative potential. In contemporary museological literature these efforts are often referred to with terms such as "making museums matter" (Weil 2002), "analyzing significance" and "writing of significance statements" (Russell and Winkworth 2009; *Assessing Museum Collections in Six Steps* 2014; Høy et al., 2015), "pointing out cultural biographies" (Van Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch 2011) or "selecting the key objects" (Lehto-Vahtera 2018). Focusing on such themes as significance has become a useful tool for defining legitimacy in the field of cultural heritage at a time when financial resources are being scrutinized. The Finnish significance evaluation, *Analyzing Significance* (2015) is a tool designed for Finnish museum collections to determine the level of collection objects' significance and museum value. It is based on its

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international counterparts, such as the Australian Significance 2.0 (2009) or Dutch *Assessing Museum Collections in Six Steps* (2014). The method is designed to work together with other means of documentation and value assessment used in museums and to produce a significance statement as a result. It is a method to enrich the information contained in museum collections. Furthermore, in the field of conservation, values are tested in practice during any given conservation project. A conservator has to be aware of the existing value network of the project at hand, in order to conduct sound conservation procedures (Appelbaum 2007).

The idea of analyzing significance is not necessarily a new phenomenon. In old collections, the recognition of significance and an object's status as a key object have had time to accumulate throughout the history of the museum. In these cases, it is easy to point out meaningful objects of collections, such as the Mesolithic soapstone object, Elk's Head of Huitinen in the collection of the Finnish National Museum, the mid-19th century cow leather diving suit, The Old Gentleman in the Raahe Museum or the oil painting *Fighting Capercaillie* (1886) by Ferdinand von Wright from the Finnish National Gallery's collection. These artefacts possess the highest level of museum value. It is also possible to start an investigation of possible key objects and their significance by collecting existing information on collection objects, surveying current values of museum staff and visitors and enriching this knowledge by new research. This could be done by active collection work, research and discussions, as well as by interviews directed towards the public or surveying the marketing material of museums, as was done in the *Key Objects of Collections* survey published in 2018 (Lehto-Vahtera 2018). This survey, published by the Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova Museum in Turku, aimed to

connect the knowledge that museums have on certain collection items and visitor experiences in order to show the power of museum objects as memory makers.

These recent writings give emphasis to the environment in which the museum context has been created and accumulated, as well as offering additional building blocks for constructing museum identity. It has to be kept in mind, however, that it is not only a question of single objects, their significance or their key role as part of a museum collection. It is about the process in which one museum item has to be seen as part of a greater heritage reserve, regardless of ownership. It is important to see the collections that we have as a reserve, regardless under whose ownership they might be at any given time in history, and to see museums pointing out signification in this reserve. Furthermore, it is important to learn to comprehensively evaluate and give meaning to processes:

This approach requires a comprehensive and integrated perspective on heritage, that is, an approach where all heritage sectors play a role. The traces of history and the stories are recorded by many different heritage institutions: museums, archives, libraries, and organizations in the field of built heritage and nature and landscape protection, but also organizations concerned with intangible heritage (folk dance groups, etc.). Together these institutions constitute the memory of the place. It involves more than preservation and availability of information. It's mainly about signification (Van Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch 2011: 93).

It is seen through these processes that meanings and value are constructed, and museums are made to matter. It is not only museums, but also the whole heritage sector that should be involved in this process. In order to participate,

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value discussion is needed, and the work ends up having an impact. In general, the concept of an impact factor has been chosen as a key one when studying meaningfulness in society, either from the economic point of view or a more intangible one (Conn 2010; Davies 2011; Holden 2006; Scott 2013; Weil 2002). What do people consider meaningful in their own environment, and why? Through active value discussion museum professionals will be better equipped to respond to these questions and to any short-term fluctuations in their everyday work. With the help of these discussions, they will be better prepared to help mediate important issues in the heritage field for future decision makers. In this process it is important that museum professionals understand and see their working role as mediators, and not merely as contemporary consumers. One can ultimately address this issue through the following question: To what extent has the entire museum succeeded in its work as a mediator?

One way to measure such success is to look at the impact factor of meaningful objects in society. Museum collections and the network of values embedded within them are things that not many other institutions in society possess. This reality should not be disregarded in time and place, where one's own impact is a factor. It is important to understand that there have been institutional structures showing interest towards meaningful objects, century after century. The fact that there are societies in the world that consider museum collections important is a straightforward indicator that an impact factor is indeed present. The continued care and existence of museum objects throughout the centuries is very strong evidence of this.

My article introduces the term "museumological value discussion" (*museologinen arvokes-kustelu*) as a way to make these issues visible. To use the term "museumological value discussion"

takes a comprehensive approach to collection development. With this, it is meant that the value perspective of the discussion is wider than just one object and its potential value accumulation. It also means seeing values accumulating century after century. This understanding does not restrict itself only to museums as institutions or their collections but leads to a wider perspective and encompasses all museumologically meaningful phenomena in society (Hudson 1993; Sola 2004; Van Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch 2011). This aspect helps us to understand historically significant objects comprehensively, where museums as institutions are one part of the whole.

Museums and their collections do not exist in an isolated past, nor do they bear meaning only in our current society but carry meaning and understanding from the past to the present and to the future. In this process, a comprehensive point of view is essential because it allows us to view values from a longer lasting and wider perspective. This includes pointing out the network of values meaningful to museums and carrying significance from past generations onward. In this discourse, we need museumological value discussion. When museum professionals see their role as mediators, they function as important links and carry on the work of past generations. The Professor of Museology at Jyväskylä University sees the situation as follows: "Professionalism related to research and preservation work of the current museum generation will greatly determine what kind of past we will have in the future." (Vilkuna 2003: 10).

Museumological value discussion results in a value network, which consists of selected values specific to a given museum or heritage organization. This network is created in a process, in which the organization itself determines the specific values for its identity. This network is not based only on our current idea of values or

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identity, but on those that have accumulated century after century and is seen, for example, in the existence and caretaking of a collection object throughout history. It is seen in the obvious key objects of our culture and the significance that these objects have accumulated. By studying these networks, specific to each museum and its identity, it is possible to gain information about the mutual values of museums, in order to reach a common voice.

The need for a museological value discussion becomes evident when studying the field further, especially in the process of evaluating a museum's own identity. When determining any long-term decisions affecting a museum's collection or identity, museological value discussion comprehensively takes into account the entire span of everyday museum practices. However, it also addresses the need to consider both philosophical and practical approaches. For example, it functions as a bridge between philosophical issues such as good vs. bad collection items and more pragmatic issues, such as the monetary-oriented values (i.e. insurance values or accounting values) of collections. It is not enough for such a discussion to be based only on philosophical grounds, monetary issues or even the public's current experiences and expectations. Any value discussion has to be museologically oriented in order to cover all sectors of museum work and in order to have a longer-term influence.

The 2012 survey answers, where museum personnel were given an opportunity to freely choose values that best fit their museum and its collection, clearly showed that museological value discussion does in fact take place in Finnish art museums. The following five values emerged from the material as the most important ones in Finnish art museums: artistic, aesthetic, museum value, research value and value related to locality (Robbins 2016: 178). These

were also congruent with the values presented in the operational documents of Finnish art museums and can be seen as reflecting their overall collective values. These five values are an integral part of the Finnish art museum value network and can eventually be utilized to help museums clarify their focus.

These factors were also discussed in the 2018 interviews with the four museum professionals, who all emphasized the need for active participation and practice. In this process, the role of professional experience in achieving any comprehensive view was seen as meaningful. Furthermore, it became clear that efforts toward bridging theory and practice will be beneficial in helping to achieve any relevant practical results regarding value discussions.

SIGNS OF TACIT KNOWLEDGE WITHIN COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

The 2012 survey showed that art museum professionals in fact have a lot of information, knowledge and knowhow regarding value assessments. It also showed that a lot of this information is still tacit. Tacit knowledge is often contrasted with explicit knowledge. Terms such as "gut-feeling" and "knowledge at my fingertips" are often used to describe its character (Koivunen, 1997; Polanyi, 1966). In this article tacit knowledge is understood as something that is difficult to transfer into writing. For example, unwritten customs and caretaking procedures in the field of collection management that are upheld but have not been officially documented. These customs may not be official or written but they are nonetheless very much rooted in everyday museum practices, and this know-how is transferred to every new museum professional coming to work in the museum.

All this is valuable capital and should not be ignored. To focus on tacit information takes the

research into areas that are hard to quantify. Nevertheless, it is important to take such areas into consideration in the humanities. It is important to study methods with which unwritten and silent information can be made visible. In addition to factual knowledge involving collection development, we also need to study conceptions, attitudes and emotions.

Traditionally, professionals in Finnish museums have attained their education from various types of institutions – universities, polytechnics and trade schools. Professionals and their educational backgrounds

only come together to form a unified museum staff in the working environment (Hakamies 2017). This is where everyday value discussions take place and also where the practical application of values can be studied.

The 2012 survey and 2017–2018 interviews and workshops suggest that it would be beneficial for future museum professionals to make any value related tacit knowledge visible, be it in the area of collection management or development, long-term visions, exhibitions, financial resources or pedagogical goals. I believe it's important to bring forth this unified "opinion" and study the complexity of the social phenomena based on everyday working experience, make it visible and expose it to academic scrutiny.

MUSEUM INTERVIEWS AND WORKSHOPS

The first chapters of this article have given the basis as to why we need value research among museum professionals and introduced the need for museological value discussion as a comprehensive method for evaluating the impact of museum work. The results presented in this chapter are a continuation of the work already done within the subject area.

The four in-depth interviews were conducted during spring 2018 in order to gather information about the importance of collection

work and collection-related values in the selected museums: Collection Curator from the Tuusula Art Museum (10.1.2018); Collection Management Director from the National Gallery of Finland (6.2.2018); Collection Curators from the Rovaniemi Art Museum (21.2.2018) and the Helsinki City Museum (4.5.2018).

Information about the current value situation within the field of collection development was collected through these two-hour interviews by presenting the same set of questions to the interviewees. To interview four professionals produces only a very small insight into all of the know-how imbedded in Finnish museums, but the museum types these professionals represented gave the interviews a wider perspective than such a relatively small number of participants would normally indicate. In total, there are 154 professionally operated museums in Finland, which have 323 separate museum locations under their care. Professionally operated museums require full time museum operations, regular opening hours and at least one full-time employee who has completed studies in museology (Museotilasto 2018). The principle behind choosing these museums for the interviews was an attempt to gain current information from large museums, such as The National Gallery and The Helsinki City Museum. It was also considered important to get the opinion of a museum that has a strong local identity and a significant contemporary collection. Finally, it was meaningful to gain knowledge of collection management from a museum that houses both artworks and cultural historical material. The aspects of housing a large collection, having local significance and taking care of mixed collections were all seen as important, and were seen to some degree to represent professional museums in Finland overall.

The selection of the interviewees was based on experience. This need became clear from the

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2012 survey answers (Robbins 2016; 2017). Regarding the study at hand it was considered important that the person interviewed would have a long-term and thorough understanding of their collection content, would need to deal with value-based discussions in their everyday duties and have large collections under their care. One has to keep in mind that the museum sector in Finland is relatively modest in terms of the number of professionals and number of large collections as compared to larger European museums (Museotilasto 2018).

In addition to the museum interviews, four hands-on value workshops for students were organized in 2017 and 2018, in Helsinki and Amsterdam. Bachelor's- and master's-level students of the Museum Studies program from Helsinki University (9.11.2017 and 12.12.2018), master's-level students of the Museum Studies program from the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam (10.10.2018) and bachelor's-level students of conservation from the Metropolia Polytechnic in Helsinki (30.11.2018). The information gained through these workshops functioned as a comparison to the interview material and enlarged the scope to include present and future museum

professionals. Students from the Reinwardt Academy were the most international. In this group, there were students from the Netherlands, Brazil, India, Spain and Italy. The first group of Finnish students was still completing their studies on the bachelor's-level, whereas the second Finnish university group was master's-level students who had also gained practical experience thorough internships in museums. In the group of conservation students, study lines such as painting, paper, object, textile and furniture were represented. These groups were chosen for the workshops in order to observe any differences in experience and preparedness toward value discussion based on the amount of study credits.

Both the four interviews and the four value workshops were conducted, keeping the methods of Grounded Theory in mind, where space is left for free contemplation, and where theoretical formation can be developed as the research proceeds (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1999; Strauss and Corbin 1998). The procedures offered by Grounded Theory gave the possibility to utilize a co-operative method, where the role of experienced colleagues made rich and in-depth discussions possible. In this way the interview situation could be interpreted as a peer-research process instead of as a researcher-recipient process. The selection of collection professionals working with both art and cultural historical collections in large museums, in one local museum and in one significant museum outside the metropolitan area was seen as a potential starting point for rich data. This was seen as possessing interpretive value, even though only four members of the museum profession were interviewed. Furthermore, interviews with museum professionals and free discussions at the end of each workshop with students brought up themes and issues that were not part of the original plan. The verification of collected data was done after each session and modified, if necessary, for the following interviews and workshops. In this way the research material was enriched, and potentially tacit information had a chance to surface. All but one workshop took place after the interviews and the answers of the professionals guided themes during the student discussions. This gave the opportunity for such professionals to share their thoughts with students, thus also emphasizing the co-operative aspect. All in all, the method gave an opportunity for any common value ground to surface. To search for any common ground may seem odd in the present-day climate of individualism, but indeed to find common ground and consensus is something that

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might help facilitate value-based decision making in the area of collection care.

All the interviewees were museum professionals in charge of collection management who gave their permission to publish the interview material. The interviews were conducted by presenting the same set of questions to each interviewee and making notes of their answers. At the end of the interviews, all the notes were read and accepted by the interviewees. In general, five focal points for further development were obtained from this material: 1) to clarify the terminology used when engaging in value discussions, 2) to reach consensus on value goals, 3) to be prepared for and actually practice value talk, 4) to open the discussion on the acceptable level of collection care and 5) to recognize the various focal points that different museums have.

One of the issues brought up in the interviews was the question of terminology, especially how the term "national" is entering the forum of critical debate. Especially in the field of collection care the role of Finland's national collection (kansalliskokoelma) has been discussed, as was stated by the Collection Management Director from the National Gallery. The role of the terms "collective" and "national" was discussed, i.e. what is meant by these terms in our current culture? Is there a need for a collective memory in the future, and if so, why? It was also discussed that the history of the modern museum and national awakening go hand in hand in Finland. Furthermore, one has to keep in mind that even if the sense of collectiveness should diminish in the future, museum collections and their objects will still remain. This is why it was further indicated by the Collection Curator from the Tuusula Art Museum "that any value processes in museums should have a longer lifespan than one museum career". She also noted that the long-term requirement of collection work does not correspond well to the

current division of city functions into various service organizations, organizations that aim to provide services to current citizens, thus operating with a much shorter timeline and perspective. This aspect should definitely be discussed and further developed so that the organizational structure would recognize the need for longer-term planning in the museum sector. These needs should be recorded in the official museum documents and made visible to future generations to allow younger museum professionals see the accumulation of knowledge.

Furthermore, it was discussed that museum professionals have to be active, learn and maintain vigilance regarding value discussion, and they have to learn to stay prepared, since “impulses for value discussion emerge from everyday situations which may need fast responses”, as was described by the Tuusula Art Museum Curator. On a practical level, this might mean a situation where a public artwork is removed from its original space and museum professionals are forced to make quick decisions as to the replacement of the artwork. The preparedness for fast responses has to be there, and this can only be reached by value practice. These concerns were also present in the 2012 survey answers, as can be seen in the quotation below:

One of the difficulties is that a work of art in a collection will remain art, even if we do not possess the needed tools for a definition of art. Even the relevant legislation does not give us any accurate definition as to when an artwork threshold is reached, not to mention all the needed quality requirements of art. From a copyright point of view, bad art will also always remain art. The difficulties appear when one has to determine between good and bad art. In the process of value assessment, one has to acknowledge one's own subjectivity and historicity (Robbins 2016: 176).

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These examples also show that value discussion may include subjects from small to large and from abstract to very concrete. Furthermore, the 2012 survey showed that museum professionals are often unaware that these everyday discussions are, in fact, value-based in nature. For example, value discussions often appear in various day-to-day situations, such as prioritizing decisions regarding collection work, the in-situ selection of guiding styles or emphasizing various research goals. They also become visible in larger issues, e.g. when discussing the role of the museum as part of a city's strategic structure. For local museums in particular, value work done in the sector of audience engagement plays a large role and is seen as a method of engaging and empowering different audiences. This became clear from the answers stated by the Rovaniemi Art Museum Curator in the 2018 interviews: “There could be various values simultaneously present within the same institutional structure”. Eventually the importance of locality and variety of focal points was acknowledged. These issues were important for the Rovaniemi Art Museum. This means that there are local museums that operate in locations that also house other functions, such as learning facilities, orchestras or evening activities. In these cases, any value discussion has to be partially aligned with these other functions. Furthermore, the issue of locality may cause values to be seen based on latitude, taking cultural similarities into account, rather than similarities within national borders, as is the case with the Rovaniemi Art Museum and their co-operative projects with Sami communities.

One main issue in the field of collection management was a discussion about the acceptable level of collection care. This was especially

a concern for large collections such as the Finnish National Gallery. Museums often face a situation where the costs to upkeep collection facilities increase, while funding for long-term preservation remains the same. This leads to a question of prioritizing and eventually to a discussion of the acceptable level of collection care, if and when the desired or ideal situation cannot actually be reached. In order to be able to determine the acceptable level, one needs to reach an overall picture of the pros and cons and ask questions such as the following: “What is the amount of our care debt?” as was presented by the Collection Manager from the National Gallery, or “How many objects are enough?” as the Helsinki City Museum Curator asked. To answer these questions, I believe that we need museological value discussion to function as an internal tool for museum professionals. Only after this work can information regarding collection identity be passed on to other stakeholders and audiences. No doubt, it is possible to include participants from various fields of society in these discussions, as was shown by the previous examples of analyzing significance. Nevertheless, opinions of the interviewees showed that in order to successfully conduct such co-operation, professional experience is required.

It was commented on by all of the interviewees that collection-oriented value discussion needs practice in order to accumulate its vocabulary. It was seen as important to voice one's own everyday work and make its tacit character visible. This was seen as one method of helping the accumulation of value vocabulary. It was also seen that “the creation of an argumentation portfolio of this kind would bring depth to situations where broad structural conditions such as local politics play a role. It would also diminish the possibility of any wrong signals”, as the Tuusula Art Museum Curator indicated.

Finally, she pointed that this kind of active and on-going value practice would lead to deeper outcomes than would value remarks by themselves, which are made more on the basis on visitor surveys or financial resources.

The interviews provided information to further develop material for students and professionals. As a result, educational days for museum professionals regarding collection care values are being planned and carried out. Furthermore, workshops for students regarding condition of collections were conducted for students from various heritage study programs. The first workshop test-run for bachelor's-level students took place in November 2017. This was to test the students' preparedness to participate in value related discussions. Similar workshops have been conducted by various institutions in order to provide insight into the material value of museum objects (Simil a and Eastop 2017). The 2017 test showed that students are eager to state their opinions and learn more about the practical application of value discussion but need more guidance in accumulating the value discussion vocabulary. To develop these workshops, both for professionals and students, is seen as a valuable hands-on tool that will eventually have the potential to increase museum impact.

Eventually, the 2018 workshops for students were conducted in several steps. Students discussed values in groups, using cards that represented six levels of damage (good condition, information missing, wrinkles, tears, stains and burn marks). After a discussion, they divided these cards into four value classes (main collection, usage collection, evaluation collection and disposal collection). Time was allowed for a thorough discussion, after which each group presented their evaluation. Finally, all information was displayed together, and students formulated statements as to why each card

belonged to a specific value class. At the end of the session, the class discussed the differences found in each group's decision and learned to assert and justify their own value judgments.

There were some common features that all of the groups shared. One of these was the strong view that the selection into a specific value class always needs a knowledge of context in order to be solid. This was seen as very important and implies that condition can never be the mere starting point for drastic collections decisions. Furthermore, all value statements and discussions from the four sessions raised three main issues. (1) The context and background of the object at hand both need to be researched and known before any final decisions are made. (2) Any damage to museum objects might become a source of information or subsequently the genesis for storytelling. (3) Evaluation takes time and experience.

It was easy for all of the students and groups to find the objects that belonged to the first and last value classes, but decisions regarding the middle value classes (usage collection and evaluation collection) reached less consensus. The master's-level university students indicated that the context and the group of representatives have to be known, i.e. if objects in poor condition are the only representatives of their group, they might nonetheless be valuable for the collection. The conservation students were understandably more familiar with the issue of condition, and their selections seemed to be more coherent. The bachelor's-level students found the exercise important in developing their skills in articulating value. Students that were further along in their studies also utilized a wider perspective, asking, for example, if the result would be different if we had other focuses than just condition in mind? This wider perspective could include a multitude of situations where different types of collections, acquisitions

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or disposals were our focal points. Again, aspects of allowing time, having experience, knowing the specific context and reaching consensus were among the main issues discussed.

From these workshops, one could clearly see that the condition of the museum object is not by itself enough to decide its status; more information is needed. Students' statements such as "damages are interesting" or "damages tell a story" further support this. Conducting the workshops for four different groups of students in three different educational institutions clearly showed that this kind of hands-on practice is needed and will lead to a more profound learning experience. Value workshops suggest one path to make tacit knowledge regarding collection care more visible and also available for scrutiny. Furthermore, they will equip students with a more extensive vocabulary for expressing museological values. It will be possible to take this demand into account in the planning of future Museum Studies courses of the Helsinki University, since the teaching methods for Museum Studies were updated in 2017 and more collaborative and hands-on methods were introduced (Thomas et al., 2018). In the new curriculum museum professionals are included in sharing their knowledge with students, and all courses are planned so that students will take part in more actual hands-on museum work during their studies. This way, the information flow will remain up-to-date at all times and students will be better equipped for value-related discussions when starting their careers.

TO HAVE VALUES AT OUR FINGERTIPS

The 2018 interviews and student workshops gave a good starting point for further development of value practices for museums professionals. They also were a good update to the 2012 survey. The message seems clear.

Practice in the area of museological value discussion is needed and an accumulating value portfolio would be useful. Collection work has to be understood as a long-term endeavor that has somewhat divergent goals than those most valued by the current service-oriented city structures. Discussion about terminology is needed, and the tacit side of collection work needs to become more visible. Local issues have to become part of value discussion, and geographical differences in identity have to be better understood. These factors were brought up repeatedly.

Even though the museological value discussion is mainly intended to be used as an internal tool for museum professionals, it will eventually have consequences that would benefit the public as well. The transparency of museum collection work could result in writings, publications and exhibition texts that open up behind-the-scenes actions and motifs to the general public, for example, by making the motifs of any particular exhibition process visible to the public by including these motifs as part of exhibition material.

There is an often-used expression, "to have something at your fingertips" in the field of conservation. This means that you have professionally reached a point where the knowledge that you have read and learned has been transferred to your fingertips, so to speak, becoming part of the almost automatic gut-feeling experience that guides your sharp scalpel. This process "to have values at our fingertips" will be the ultimate goal in the field of museological value discussion for museum professionals at large. END

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Multi-language Abstract

The contents of this page will be used as part of the multi-language abstract as part of the html version. It will not be published as part of main article in the print or PDF version

Tämä artikkeli käsittelee suomalaisten museoiden kokoelmanhallintaan liittyvää arvokeskustelua, ja esittelee museoammattilaisten haastattelujen ja museoalan opiskelijoille suunnattujen työpajojen kautta saatua tietoa. Artikkelin fokuksena on tuottaa sekä museoammattilaisille että museoalan opiskelijoille käytännön työkaluja ottaa aktiivisesti osaa arvokeskusteluihin. Tämän työn tuloksena yhteiskunnan eri sektoreiden on mahdollista tunnistaa museologisen arvokeskustelun tärkeät, ja nostaa erityisesti voittoa tavoittelemattomien arvojen merkitystä. Tarkoituksena on löytää hyviä käytännön toimintamalleja ja vahvistaa museoammattilaisten kyvykkyyksiä tehdä kestävä kulttuurityötä. Tällä toiminnalla on pitkäkestoista vaikuttavuutta.